

Light OF LIFE

AN ADVENT GUIDE FOR YOUTH

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

John 1:1-9

NRSVA

A Foreward to Youth Workers

As Christmas quickly approaches, we recognize that there is a lot going on. Christmas parties to plan, gifts to wrap, songs to rehearse, not to mention your unique family traditions. While it is considered the “Happiest time of year,” it is also a quite busy time. Even now, we at Youthfront are working on Christmas at Camp and content for next summer to create tangible ways for your students to encounter the God who shows up. The time around Thanksgiving and Christmas can be filled with emotions, not all of them pleasant. Advent is the time of year where we acknowledge the desperate need for the redemption of all Creation, and we begin to turn our eyes and prayers to God. Throughout time, Advent has come to be represented by four key elements of the Christian life: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. Each of these bear significance on a theological and practical level. Together they form the ground upon which each of us might find our footing.

Advent refers to a time of waiting and anticipation. When we look at Advent through a positive lens, we see this waiting and anticipation much like we do Christmas morning. We see that something good is going to happen, but is not quite here. On the other hand, we can find ourselves in a place of waiting and anticipation that more closely resembles desperation. As autumn turns to winter, our rhythms begin to change. The days shorten and the sun feels less warm and its light begins to wane. We turn our attention to Christmas, but we are not there yet. First we must learn to wait, to sit and listen to what God might have for us. As we begin to do this, the themes of Advent come to the forefront. We begin to seek hope, peace, joy, and love. In doing so, we invite you to consider the places in your life, or in the world at large, that need these things now more than ever. As we prepare our hearts for Christmas, let us first be reminded of where we are and where we have been, so that we may better understand the life God is leading us into. Take a moment to consider this prayer and what God has for us in this season:

Advent: Call to Worship

Our world is dark,
God, we struggle to see You.
Our world is loud,
God, we struggle to hear You.
Our world is painful,
God, we struggle to feel You.
Our world is overwhelming,
God, we struggle to trust You.
Our world is busy and never stops,
God, we struggle to rest in You.

As Advent ensues, consider the importance of traditions. Some of these will be named, others will be things you have simply done for years without ever putting it on the calendar. Our hope is that you would begin to set aside the time to simply be together and enjoy each other's presence.

What to Expect

SUGGESTED STRUCTURE

Call to Worship (1 min)

Lighting of Candles and Scripture (5 min)

Teaching/Reflection (5-10 min)

Group Questions (10-15 min)

Group Activity (15 min)

Activity Debrief (5-10 min)

Prayer (1 min)

Total time is around 42-57 min.¹

Each week, we will begin the same way, by responding to the Call to Worship. This practice helps us to ground ourselves in some of the very real, but difficult truths we live in everyday, while reminding us we are not alone in them. Following the Call will be the lighting of candles and reading of a portion of Scripture from the Gospel of Luke and brief reflection to situate us in the Christian narrative.² Afterward your group will have the opportunity to engage with the Bible story on a more personal level through discussion questions and group activities. Each week will end with a prayer to carry with you into the next week.

Throughout this guide, we will provide you with ways to share memories and stories of when and where God has shown up as well as allow space to recognize those places that feel lonely or overwhelming. Our hope is for your group to create new memories through a practice of presence. By being together we commit ourselves to one another, emphasizing the importance of bringing our undistracted selves to the table. Take time each week to look over what supplies you will need.³ In the appendix of this guide, you will find a student handout page to print for each week.

Additionally, as a way to deepen the Light of Life Advent experience, we want to invite your group to Youthfront's annual **Christmas at Camp** event. For four nights in December, Youthfront Camp West will be decked with lights and buzzing with life-size games, cozy bonfires and festive snacks. But the main feature of

¹ If your group uses music in a typical gathering we invite you to do so as you see fit.

² A traditional Advent Wreath consists of 5 candles, 1 pink, 3 purple, and 1 white Christ Candle. The four colored candles sit in a round frame while the Christ candle sits in the middle.

³ A note about atmosphere: set up your space to use lighting and seating to create a sense of warmth. Maybe use candles or alternative lighting (like Christmas lights) if your space does not utilize adjustable lights.

What to Expect

our event is a Nativity Walk that will guide you and your students through the Christmas story with the same focus as our Light of Life curriculum.

Christmas at Camp is open for two weekends: Dec. 1 and 2, and 8 and 9. On Friday, Dec. 8, we will host a special Youth Group Night, with additional programming and experiences included for youth groups. We'd love for you to join us on this special night with your group, or any night that works.

As you walk through this guide together, we invite you into this idea of practiced presence by adopting some boundaries for your time together. The first would be to set aside distractions. This may mean setting phones in another room or turning them off and making sure that devices are not present unless specifically required for an activity.⁴ The second is that there is such a thing as a holy distraction. These are moments we invite. We believe God is still at work in our world, and recognize that life can happen, even when something sacred or spiritual occurs. Life is not an intrusion, but a part of it. This includes the side comments from middle and high school students. Or when someone inevitably falls out of their chair because they were leaning too far back. Remind yourself of the importance of showing up and the necessity of simply being together in all of it.

As the text we began with demonstrates, Christ, the Light of Life, was at the beginning, illuminating all that would be created and yet Christ continues to come into the world bringing about light and, in doing so, dispels the darkness. May we be willing to acknowledge both the light and dark places in our lives, lamenting the hard broken realities and celebrating the hope and goodness of a Savior born to bring light to our darkened world. Whether you are entering Advent excited and ready to celebrate or unenthusiastically going through the motions, we hope this Guide offers an opportunity to pause with others and notice the presence of Jesus as our Light.

A final note about this guide; let it serve you. Our hope for this guide is that it lightens your load in an already busy season. If you have the space or energy to build off of this we want it to actually be for your students. As the Youth Worker in your local context, you know most specifically what your students need. We also recognize the holidays present some unique challenges to meeting as a group, but invite you to use this guide as a springboard for your own Advent experience, or use it as a curriculum to guide your students into a somewhat unfamiliar season.⁵ This guide has been designed to assist you in the task of revealing a Christ-soaked world.⁶

⁴ This could be a phone basket or tower. There is also a prayer for setting aside phones that you could use, featured at the end of this PDF. If using the Liturgy for phones, we suggest printing out some copies to drive home the setting aside of digital distractions.

⁵ You might use this guide on both one week night and Sunday morning so you can touch on each theme before taking a break from youth gatherings.

⁶ The Guide will list sections in the following order: Title, Main Idea, Supplies, Call to Worship, Scripture, Reflection, Group Questions, Activity, and Sending Prayer.

Week 1 WAITING FOR THE LIGHT

Week 1: Waiting for the Light!

Main Idea: Students will be able to see that hope and doubt can coexist, because God enters into our doubt to show us a way forward.

Supplies: Bible, Advent wreath, lighter/matches, writing utensils, printable student sheets or paper

CALL TO WORSHIP

(Light two purple candles)

Our world is dark,

God, we struggle to see You.

Our world is loud,

God, we struggle to hear You.

Our world is painful,

God, we struggle to feel You.

Our world is overwhelming,

God, we struggle to trust You.

Our world is busy and never stops,

God, we struggle to rest in You.

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 1:5-25

Other texts to consider:

Ezek. 37:1-14

Mal. 3:1

REFLECTION

Our story presented us with the image of a couple, who for one reason or another found themselves unable to have children. This was a condition known as barrenness. As Gabriel went to Zechariah to tell him the good news, Zechariah was in disbelief. After so many years the couple had settled into the reality that they would never have children of their own, in their waiting they had given up hope. They found themselves to be like the Valley of Dry Bones, empty of fertile ground for life to thrive. They had let what had been, tell them about what could be.

How often do we let our circumstances decide what can be true? How often do we let ourselves wonder what might be? More frequently than not we find ourselves in the position of Zechariah. We are stunned with disbelief that something different is possible. One of the things the passage recounts is the fact that Zechariah was unable to speak when he left the sanctuary. When we read this text we might be tempted to see this as a curse, or a punishment for not believing rightly about God. Consider instead, how the text reads if we view this silence as a gift? In silence we find a space that is bigger than we thought possible. Silence teaches us to consider what could be. When we are distracted, or simply entertained, we get stuck in how things are. When we allow space for silence we think of what might be happening and invite God to help us think of things to come. In the passage today, Zechariah had just heard the news of a lifetime! He was going to have a son. Beyond that, his son would be the one to make way for the Messiah!

Week 1 WAITING FOR THE LIGHT

GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Is it easy or difficult for you to sit in silence? Why?
2. Write about a time when you found yourself in disbelief. If you are comfortable, share this with your group.
3. Describe a circumstance where something felt lost, dead, or otherwise impossible and God brought it to life.

ACTIVITY

Standing in the Silence!

As a group, direct your students to order themselves according to:

- Age (M/D/YY)
- Alphabetical order of their name
- Shortest to tallest (without touching each other)
- Size of their favorite Christmas symbol
- Alphabetical order of their favorite Christmas movie.
- Shoe size

Direct them to complete these tasks in silence.

Afterward, discuss:

- How did communication go when you couldn't talk?
- What did you have to do to be able to 'hear' each other?
- How does waiting to find out if you were right feel?

SENDING PRAYER



As a part of your prayer during this season we encourage you to incorporate a hand sign or symbol with each prayer. We recommend an open hand for Hope. We invite you to carry this hand sign and prayer with you throughout the week.

Lord, teach us to wait. Help us as we grow impatient or angry. Remind us of your great promise, that you are present with us. In coming to earth and living as both God and human, you understand our human experiences and our struggles. Help us to remember this when life gets tough, and to live life out of the Hope we have received. Thank you for being present with us and working to make all things right. Teach us how to live as a result of Your Hope.

Week 2 SURPRISED BY LIGHT

Week 2: Surprised by the Light!

Main Idea: Students will see that God can be trusted to be good, even when we don't see the whole picture.

Supplies: Items to be obstacles, blindfolds/bandanas, Advent wreath, lighter/matches, writing utensils, printable student sheets or paper

CALL TO WORSHIP

(Light two purple candles)

Our world is dark,

God, we struggle to see You.

Our world is loud,

God, we struggle to hear You.

Our world is painful,

God, we struggle to feel You.

Our world is overwhelming,

God, we struggle to trust You.

Our world is busy and never stops,

God, we struggle to rest in You.

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 1:26-45

Other texts to consider:

Gen. 12:1-9

Exo. 3:1-15,

Isa. 11:1-9

REFLECTION

Think about a time when a big transition or change was about to occur. What were the feelings you experienced? Probably a little bit of excitement and joy mixed with a bit of fear and anxiety. You may have wondered, "How is this possible, God? How will this work out?" Like Mary, we can trust God even when our situation feels scary or confusing. It is like you are going hiking or rock-climbing, but you are not quite sure of where the next step will land you. Mary experienced a moment of life that felt like unstable ground. Instead of letting fear and uncertainty tell her to stay where she is or that this wonderful thing wasn't really possible, she accepted that God would continue to show up as God had always shown up. Mary welcomed Gabriel's message and trusted God to do this seemingly impossible thing.

As Mary was pregnant and waiting, there had to be all sorts of things going through her mind. When she felt the first kick or stopped feeling them for a while, Mary probably felt some uncertainty even after trusting God. When that happened Mary had the opportunity to talk to her cousin Elizabeth who was just a bit further along in her pregnancy. She was able to connect with other people who had to trust God and learn from them in a very uncertain and overwhelming time. She was able to receive peace from Gabriel as he said, "Do not be afraid." Or from Elizabeth as she affirmed her and said, "Blessed is she who believed (trusted)." Peace is not the absence of the chaotic, but a trust that God is still good in the midst of uncertainty.

Week 2 SURPRISED BY LIGHT

GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Describe a time when you have stepped into uncertainty or the unknown. What was it like to make that decision? How did it turn out?
2. Who is someone that has been encouraging or consoling to you in times that feel chaotic or overwhelming?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? What does this passage tell us about people?

ACTIVITY

Seeing in the Dark!

Create an obstacle course in your youth room/space with chairs and tables. Have the students partner up. After partners are established, have one person in each pair wear a bandana or blindfold, ensuring that nothing is visible to them through the covering. Without using physical contact, the partner standing on the other side of the course leads the blindfolded one across the course, trying to avoid running into any obstacles.

After each pair has made it across, have them switch roles and do it again. You can even have them switch starting places so that the terrain is unfamiliar again. After the second group has completed the course have a discussion about the game as it relates to the text. Here are some questions to get the ball rolling.

- What is so unsettling about the dark/uncertainty?
- Who plays the role of the guide in the story?
- In what ways was Mary "blindfolded"?
- What are we being invited into?

**Other variations may have the partner use sounds but no words, or the partner could walk behind the blindfolded person and tap them on the shoulder without speaking to direct them to step left or right.*

SENDING PRAYER



As a part of your prayer during this season we encourage you to incorporate a hand sign or symbol with each prayer, we recommend the peace sign for Peace. We invite you to carry this hand sign and prayer with you throughout the week.

Jesus, when we are unsure about our next step or filled with doubt about our circumstances, help us to name our fears and struggles. For You are with us and we belong to You. Help us to remember this when life gets tough, and to live life out of the Peace we have received. Thank you for giving us firm ground to stand on. Teach us how to live as a result of Your Peace.

Week 3 CELEBRATING THE LIGHT

Week 3: Celebrating the Light!

Main Idea: Students will learn that there are things worth celebrating.

Supplies: Paper, a variety of writing and coloring utensils, printable student sheets, Advent wreath, lighter/matches

CALL TO WORSHIP

(Light two purple candles)

Our world is dark,

God, we struggle to see You.

Our world is loud,

God, we struggle to hear You.

Our world is painful,

God, we struggle to feel You.

Our world is overwhelming,

God, we struggle to trust You.

Our world is busy and never stops,

God, we struggle to rest in You.

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 1:46-66

Other text to consider:

Gen. 15

REFLECTION

Our passage today mentioned a promise that was given to Abraham. Abraham is considered the father of the Jewish people. After Abraham had been called out into an unknown land, God made a promise to bless him with many descendants and that his descendants would be a blessing unto the world. The kind of promise God made is known as a covenant. This is traditionally a very serious event. If one person broke the covenant the other person had the right to cut them in half, just as the animals had been cut in half to signify the importance of the covenant. This feels very barbaric to us today, but God sets up a different kind of covenant. Instead of both people walking through the animals in agreement to the covenant, God goes through alone. In this moment God says, even when you don't hold up your end of the bargain, I will work for your good. Even when you throw a tantrum and fight to have your needs met in harmful ways, I will still love you.

Consider for a moment what it feels like to be taken care of in this way. Would we let this happen? As God forms this covenant with Abraham and gives Mary the promise of a baby boy who would save the world, he is giving them permission to accept these things as gifts. Not as something to be earned. In our text today Mary welcomed this promise and reminded us of who God had been to her ancestors. In doing so, she belted out a song of joy called the Magnificat. She welcomed this gift, and celebrated with joy!

reflection continued on p. 11

Week 3 CELEBRATING THE LIGHT

We often think we know what is best. Or what it would take for us to be joyful. Or how we want to go about getting our needs met. But God doesn't ask us to have it all figured out, rather he says, "Do you trust me?" Advent is about a God who shows up and is present with us in the joys and sorrows of life. God shows up and says, "I know things don't look great right now, but let me walk with you for a bit. Let me teach you what to pay attention to." Advent shows us that sometimes God shows up when we feel lost, voiceless, or alone and asks if we want to change the world. When we ask how, God simply responds, "Do you trust me?" God walks with us and wonders what might be possible if we accept things as gifts instead of needing to earn them.

GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Is it easy or difficult for you to trust others? What about trusting yourself? Why?
2. How are you responding to the question, "Do you trust me?"
3. What posture do you have when it comes to celebrating? Why do you think this is?

ACTIVITY

Christmas Cards (Letters to Jesus)

Take time to create a Christmas Card that you would send to Jesus. You can use your imagination and think about Jesus as a child or as an adult during this activity. Different things that might be included in this card could be prayers, things you're grateful for, or places where you need Jesus to show up through hope, peace, joy or love. Use this time to capture things you are excited for, or things that cause you to worry.

SENDING PRAYER



As a part of your prayer during this season we encourage you to incorporate a hand sign or symbol with each prayer, we recommend the 'shaka' sign for Joy. We invite you to carry this hand sign and prayer with you throughout the week.

God, thank you for teaching us how to receive gifts with joy. How to believe you look after us and hold us close. Thank you for giving us examples of true trust, through Mary, Elizabeth, and Abraham. Help us to remember this when life gets tough, and to live life out of joy and to receive everything as a gift. May we allow ourselves to be surprised by joy this season. Teach us how to live as a result of Your Joy.

Week 4 TRUSTING THE LIGHT

Week 4: Trusting in the Light!

Main Idea: Students will see that Jesus teaches us about love, even when he is just a baby.

Supplies: Snacks, hot chocolate, party decorations, photo supplies, Advent wreath, lighter/matches, writing utensils, printable student sheets or paper

CALL TO WORSHIP

(Light two purple candles)

Our world is dark,

God, we struggle to see You.

Our world is loud,

God, we struggle to hear You.

Our world is painful,

God, we struggle to feel You.

Our world is overwhelming,

God, we struggle to trust You.

Our world is busy and never stops,

God, we struggle to rest in You.

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 1:67-2:7

Other text to consider:

Matt. 1:18-25

REFLECTION

Zechariah was finally able to speak again, and the first thing he did was belt out a song. This song did a couple of different things. The first was a celebration of the goodness of God, and that God continued to act in line with God's revealed character. The second was to affirm the message given to Zechariah by the angel at the beginning of the chapter. Part of our faith story is that we are a people charged with remembering. The question becomes, what are we taking the time to remember? Zechariah, at the beginning of our Advent journey, found himself in disbelief. Instead of remembering God's faithfulness, Zechariah remembered the comments of friends and family about how he and Elizabeth were unable to have children. He remembered hearing about how he must have done something to upset God to deserve such a punishment. He had lost hope, and lost touch with his people's history with God.

The Israelites had been a people who had seen God show up time and time again. When Abraham was without an heir and nearly 100 years old, when the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt, or when they found themselves in exile, God showed up. This is Zechariah's story, this is the story of the Israelites, this is our story. In Zechariah's song he comes to remember his own story and the story of his people. The story where God shows up in the midst of suffering and heartache, walks with us, and points us toward what is possible.

reflection continued on p. 13

Week 4 TRUSTING THE LIGHT

Shortly after John's birth and Zechariah's song, we are presented with the image of Jesus being born in a stable. What can we learn from this image? God, the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of all things chose to be born. Jesus was born like all of us, as a baby. He learned to walk and to talk. He was dependent upon his parents for warmth, food, and other basic necessities. Imagine for a moment, that Jesus was a toddler learning to navigate relationships with adults and other kids. It is interesting that God chose to enter the world as a child to teach us about love. Children teach us to slow down, to stop and ask questions, and to celebrate even small things. They teach us the importance of being present in the current moment. We are quick to forget that God is still the one who shows up and shows us how to love more fully than we could have possibly imagined.

GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What song best describes your life or story and why?
2. What story do you find yourself in? Is it easier to remember positive or negative experiences? Why?
3. What does Jesus being born as a baby tell us about who God is?

ACTIVITY

Christmas Party

Take some time to celebrate the good news that God has come to where we are! Share food, hot chocolate, and even a white elephant gift exchange! Maybe even have a birthday cake for Jesus. Take some time with your group to celebrate in your own special way.

SENDING PRAYER



As a part of your prayer during this season we encourage you to incorporate a hand sign or symbol with each prayer, we recommend the 'I love you' sign for Love. We invite you to carry this hand sign and prayer with you throughout the week.

God, thank you for showing us how to trust. How to believe that you do look after us and hold us close. Thank you for providing us with examples of true trust. Help us to remember this when life gets tough, and to live life out of the Love we have received. And when you ask the question, "Do you trust me?" to have the courage to say that we will try. Teach us how to live as a result of Your Love.

Final Thoughts

BLESSINGS FROM YOUTHFRONT

We hope that this Advent Guide will be a blessing to you and your students! May the young people in your ministry be filled with Hope, Peace, Joy and Love as you remember and embrace the amazing gift of Jesus Christ our Savior.

At Youthfront, our mission is “bringing youth into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.” It is our desire to be a resource for churches, assisting and equipping youth, children’s and family pastors in the sacred and relational work they do.

We’re pleased to introduce this resource as a product of Youthfront’s Presence-Centered Parenting and Caregiving Initiative. Funded by a Lilly Endowment Inc. grant through its Christian Parenting and Caregiving Initiative, this effort is focused on helping families and congregations to engage youth in spiritual formation through classic Christian practices.

To learn more about Youthfront and the programs we offer, including resources and training for youth workers, visit youthfront.com.

Acknowledgments

Content and design by Youthfront staff with support from Lilly Endowment Inc.



Waiting for the Light



CALL TO WORSHIP

Our world is dark,
God, we struggle to see You.
Our world is loud,
God, we struggle to hear You.
Our world is painful,
God, we struggle to feel You.
Our world is overwhelming,
God, we struggle to trust You.
Our world is busy and never stops,
God, we struggle to rest in You.

HOPE

SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:5-25

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is it easy or difficult for you to sit in silence? Why?
2. Write about a time when you found yourself in disbelief. If you are comfortable, share this with your group.
3. Describe a circumstance where something feels lost, dead, or otherwise impossible and God brought it to life.

SENDING PRAYER



Lord, teach us to wait. Help us as we grow impatient or angry. Remind us of your great promise, that you are present with us. In coming to earth and living as both God and human, you understand our human experiences and our struggles. Help us to remember this when life gets tough, and to live life out of the Hope we have received. Thank you for being present with us and working to make all things right. Teach us how to live as a result of Your Hope.

Surprised by Light



CALL TO WORSHIP

Our world is dark,
God, we struggle to see You.
Our world is loud,
God, we struggle to hear You.
Our world is painful,
God, we struggle to feel You.
Our world is overwhelming,
God, we struggle to trust You.
Our world is busy and never stops,
God, we struggle to rest in You.

PEACE

SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:26-45

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe a time when you have stepped into uncertainty or the unknown. What was it like to make that decision? How did it turn out?
2. Who is someone that has been encouraging or consoling to you in times that feel chaotic or overwhelming?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? What does this passage tell us about people?

SENDING PRAYER



Jesus, when we are unsure about our next step or filled with doubt about our circumstances, help us to name our fears and struggles. For You are with us and we belong to You. Help us to remember this when life gets tough, and to live life out of the Peace we have received. Thank you for giving us firm ground to stand on. Teach us how to live as a result of Your Peace.

Celebrating the Light



CALL TO WORSHIP

Our world is dark,
God, we struggle to see You.
Our world is loud,
God, we struggle to hear You.
Our world is painful,
God, we struggle to feel You.
Our world is overwhelming,
God, we struggle to trust You.
Our world is busy and never stops,
God, we struggle to rest in You.

JOY

SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:46-66

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is it easy or difficult for you to trust others? What about trusting yourself? Why?
2. How are you responding to the question, "Do you trust me?"
3. What posture do you have when it comes to celebrating? Why do you think this is?

SENDING PRAYER



God, thank you for teaching us how to receive gifts with joy. How to believe you look after us and hold us close. Thank you for giving us examples of true trust, through Mary, Elizabeth, and Abraham. Help us to remember this when life gets tough, and to live life out of joy and to receive everything as a gift. May we allow ourselves to be surprised by joy this season. Teach us how to live as a result of Your Joy.

Trusting the Light



CALL TO WORSHIP

Our world is dark,
God, we struggle to see You.
Our world is loud,
God, we struggle to hear You.
Our world is painful,
God, we struggle to feel You.
Our world is overwhelming,
God, we struggle to trust You.
Our world is busy and never stops,
God, we struggle to rest in You.

LOVE

SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:67-2:7

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What song best describes your life or story and why?
2. What story do you find yourself in? Is it easier to remember positive or negative experiences? Why?
3. What does Jesus being born as a baby tell us about who God is?

SENDING PRAYER



God, thank you for showing us how to trust. How to believe that you do look after us and hold us close. Thank you for providing us with examples of true trust. Help us to remember this when life gets tough, and to live life out of the Love we have received. And when you ask the question, "Do you trust me?" to have the courage to say that we will try. Teach us how to live as a result of Your Love.

Liturgy of the Cell Phones

(words of the people in bold)

RELEASING PHONES

We surrender our phones

**to acknowledge that we are not as essential
as we would have ourselves believe,
and to recognize how essential we are
to this moment, this conversation, this process.**

We put down our phones

**to put down the false belief
that we can be more places than here, doing more things than this,
and to commit to being fully present, here and now.**

We turn off our phones

**to turn to each other and to the moment at hand,
with full attention, creativity and welcome.**

May we receive the gifts of full presence and essential connection.

May God meet us in this moment.

Amen.

(cell phones are shut down and surrendered)

RETRIEVING PHONES

We return from this moment, taking with us the gift of being fully present.

**May we return with gratitude and perspective
to the tasks before us and the noise around us,
a little more willing to resist the urgency,
and a little more able to receive the quiet gifts of each moment
where God is present alongside us.
Amen.**

(cell phones are retrieved)⁷

⁷ Root, Kara. *Receiving This Life: Practicing The Deepest Belonging*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. Forthcoming 2023.



I am the light of the world

whoever follows me

will never walk in darkness

but will have the

Light of Life

JOHN 8:12